



# PSYCHOENERGETICS

A BODY-MIND APPROACH TO DEPTH WORK AND PROCESS FACILITATION

## **The Importance of Disappointment**

*adapted from the work of Ian Craib*

*by Michael Mervosh*

*for the PSEN Training Program*

The anatomy of this particular emotion teaches us that our wishes, desires, hopes and expectations have limits and boundaries, and we have to learn to honor and respect this fact, in order to reconcile and adapt ourselves to what life has to offer us.



Disappointment #1: *We cannot do everything that we want to do.*

### **~ Desire ~**

Disappointment is what we feel when something we expect, intend, hope for or desire does not materialize.

The most basic motivational force that we have as human beings is *desire* – needing urgently, yearning, to the point of almost willing something into existence.

Sometimes we desire something so completely that we revert to our infantile, demanding selves and scream for it. Sometimes we will break things, threaten to hurt, or actually hurt, ourselves, and others, in order to secure the object of our desire.

We all have desires, whether we like it or not.

On the inside, it is not a matter of simply wanting something, but needing it so urgently, that without it, life seems unbearable.

*“If I yearn hard enough, long enough, if I feel this pain sufficiently and intensely enough, then my desire will be realized.”*

Most of us learn to eventually survive the disappointments of desire, with a lot of heartache.

We learn to accept that what we desire does not always exist; and if it does exist, we can't always have it. We can desire something without necessarily hoping for it, and certainly without expecting it.



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But sometimes, we believe something should happen simply because we desire it to happen, and we find ourselves unable to give up the desire, despite all the evidence we are presented with. (“*So and so* is really the right one for me!”)

Such beliefs are not a result of insanity, and not the reaction to some trauma, but still do not quite stand the test of ‘reality’.

Desire is not the same as hope.

## ~ Hope ~

We are not quite so driven by basic forces when we *hope*.

To hope for something implies that we know that hope may not be realized, and that we have made some judgment about what reality can offer, and we are testing it out.

We can also have unrealistic and thus unrelenting hopes, and when this is the case, we find ourselves maintaining the hope against the evidence to the contrary.  
(Hoping against hope.)

There is a connection between hope and our ideals.

## ~ Hope and Ideals ~

Our ideals reflect how we would like the world to be, as well as the sort of people we would like ourselves to be.

Without our ideals, nothing would seem worthwhile; we need to hold onto them, but at the same time we need to accept that our ideals are rarely ever realized.

*It is a paradox of our existence that we have to be in **both** of these positions at the same time.*

If we are certain we are to achieve our ideals, we follow a blind desire, but of a *persecutory* nature. If the world, or ourselves, do not match up to our ideals, We then punish and force the world or ourselves to do so.





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Disappointment #2: *I spend my life surrounded by other people who are more or less independent of me, and they are constantly doing things on their own account, independent of my wishes.*

The pursuits of personal fulfillment, self-expression and spiritual enlightenment can maintain infantile fantasies of omnipotence, grandiosity, and satisfaction without effort.

A crucial commitment must involve at the very least an ability to embrace something that isn't perfect, and to risk the loss of what has been embraced. It involves facing the inevitable loss of the idealized object.

*“The difference between a mature and an immature person lies in an ability to acknowledge the existence of psychological vulnerability without claiming that it invalidates everything or anything the person might say. The person is deeply in touch with the sense of being at risk and deeply in touch with the knowledge that is possible for each of us to go mad.”*

- Sherry Turkle



In this way, depth and process work cannot be offered as a guarantee or even a guide to “a good life”, or as a cure that is bound to work, as a ever-available bringer of relief from pain and anxiety, or as a way of assuring personal change, although something of all or any of these might inevitably result.

The developmental process can only deepen and be effective – and work - if the person has an idea of what it is about, is prepared to undertake the exploration, and accept the limits and boundaries of their exploratory ground.

Psychological development depends on ‘*staying in the fire*’, to the point where we begin to understand our painful disappointments, and find that they might be bearable, and that they might even be useful, in some vital way.

Perhaps in some other age, this might have simply been called ‘life’.

Even thinking about the possibility as well as the unavailability of disappointment, considering how we may be disappointments to our clients, and wondering how we might be able to address this inevitability, keeps us from false hopes and promises of a fix or a ‘cure’- which would only leave the real ‘working through’ process to someone else to provide.



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Process facilitation can be viewed as a process of learning to be, when neither the process nor the being itself is necessarily a comfortable experience, and there is no guarantee-able outcome.

The results of any such experience is always *ambivalent*.

Learning how to do effective work and learning how to activate love requires of us learning how to suffer for whatever is worthwhile. It is what Joseph Campbell often said was the '*joyful participation in the sorrows of the world*'.



*“A patient in psychotherapy does not literally return to childhood to unlearn the self-destructive pattern he evolved in growing up, although he might engage in much regressive experimentation in order to undo that negative learning.*

*What is essential is that he be able to relinquish his attachment to his pathway – be able to say to himself: “I have wasted X years in a painful and useless pursuit; this is sad, but I know have an opportunity to try another approach.” This is hard for people to do.*

*There is a strong temptation to rationalize our wrong turnings as a necessary part of development (“it taught me discipline”), or to deny that we participated fully in them (“that was before I became enlightened”).*

*Giving up these two evasions always leads to despair, but as Alexander Lowen points out, **despair is the only cure for illusion**. Without despair we cannot transfer our allegiance to reality – it is a kind of mourning period for our fantasies.*

*Some people do not survive this despair, but no major change within a person can occur without it.”*

- Philip Slater  
*Earthwalk*